

Relationship Advice: How to manage your business when you're sleeping with the CFO?



By Amy Osmond Cook for [Divorce Support Center](#)

When viewers tune into HGTV's *Fixer Uppers* each week, many wonder how TV hosts and real-life [celebrity couple](#) Chip and Joana Gaines manage to balance their personal life and professional careers. When considering the challenges of running a business, you want to surround yourself with people who share your vision and provide a comforting degree of trust. Many entrepreneurs turn to their spouse. Though the number has likely increased, in 2007, the U.S. Census Bureau's Survey of Business Owners reported there were 1.4 million firms "jointly owned and equally operated by a husband and

wife.” And while the organizational chart for your business venture may appear standard, the fact that a member of the executive board has seen you naked presents a unique set of challenges and rewards. How can husbands and wives go into business together and still like each other? It’s something that my husband, Jeff, and I are managing carefully. Here are four pieces of [relationship advice](#) that have worked for us.

Relationship Advice On Handling Business With Your Significant Other

1. Recognize the difference between business and personal mode. Once you acknowledge that a business is going to dominate the majority of your time, your business will settle into a pattern. Thus, the number one dating tip relationship experts offer is to establish boundaries that honor both a business and personal arena. “Running a business is difficult and stressful enough. Add marriage to it? That’s quite the challenge,” wrote contributor H. Lerner. “When a couple knows how to turn off the business switch and enjoy their personal lives, they are one step ahead of the game.” Once those two worlds emerge, it’s up to you and your partner to respect them. My husband and I might be in a heated discussion about something I bought that I didn’t run through the “finance department”—then our favorite show comes on, and we move into “married” mode. As difficult as it is, you have to make the mental switch.

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2. Acknowledge that business and personal conversations are going to spill into each other. Things happen. The office manager runs off to Vegas to be an Elvis impersonator, or your

teenager returns from soccer camp with a tattoo of Messi on his calf. You're going to have to discuss it ... urgently. "Trying to separate work and family when your work is your family is pretty much impossible," wrote contributor Valentina Zarya. She referred to Julia Hartz, CEO of the ticketing site Eventbrite. As a co-founder with her husband Kevin, she admitted she doesn't even try to separate the two worlds. "We focus on Eventbrite and our family. That's how we spend our time, full stop. The nature of business today is that the lines of 'work' and 'life' are a little more blurred." Zarya added that when you include kids in the mix, things get even more complicated. Admittedly, Jeff and I aren't very good at this. We can't always compartmentalize the daily events of our personal or professional lives. But when one of us needs some time and attention on a personal level, we are pretty good about communicating it to each other. And we can also make it work for us. "Ok, let's discuss business for five minutes so we can expense this dinner," is commonly heard at our house.

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3. Share the housework... or hire it out. Regardless of whether you're running a business together, it's likely that both husband and wife work. Somebody has to mind the store at home, but nobody wants to do it— and for good reason. Work schedules have never been more stressful, and the distinction between public and private life is blurred with the additional flexibility that many businesses offer. If you're just too busy to do the dishes, it might be time to hire some help. I knew it was time when I came home from work to a dirty house and started blaming Jeff for it— when he had been working all day. While hiring help was expensive, it was cheaper than hiring relationship experts for marriage therapy, and was worth every penny.

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4. Master the bedroom. When it seems as if the major parts of your day are regimented into “to-do” lists and schedules, there is one area where time and titles shouldn’t matter. Your bedroom is a refuge from reality, so use it – a lot. “Appreciate your unique relationship,” wrote David and Carrie McKeegan, writers and co-founders of Greenback Expat Tax Services. “The entrepreneurial lifestyle can be intense and having someone to share it with help make it more manageable but also rewarding – sharing your passion for the business with the one you love can be powerful.”

Running a business with your trusted partner can be an exciting and rewarding experience—or, not. By establishing clear boundaries, relying on loving trust while treating this endeavor as a serious business, and sharing duties while being generous with private time, you can design an exciting future in entrepreneurship without scrapping a promising future with your spouse.

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